

# Sculpting the

By KAREN HOAG

Special to The Daily Herald

When he was a little kid in New Zealand, sculptor LeRoy Transfield liked to draw pictures. Now living in Provo, he shares memories of that time which eventually led him to sculpting.

"What used to frustrate me is I couldn't take it (the drawing) off the page and touch it and hold it. I wanted it to have a presence," the sculptor says.

Recently, two of his sculptures won top honors out of more than 200 entries in a "Works of the Spirit" art contest in Pasadena, Calif. The winning sculptures by Transfield are "Madonna and Child" and "Christ Healing the Blind Man."

His work is handled by Repartee Galleries. They have four galleries: Frameworks in University Mall, Orem; Repartee at both the ZCMI Center and Foothill Mall in Salt Lake City and Repartee on Old Main Street in Park City. The two winning works are available at Frameworks.

Transfield has a bachelor's in fine arts from Brigham Young University-Hawaii and studied under Jan Fisher, "one of the best sculptors in the U.S. there is," he says.

"He (Fisher) skipped modern art and went back to the techniques or the whole concept of the Renaissance era: Leonardo di Vinci and Michelangelo," Transfield explains.

The sculptor learned design from Fisher. "He taught me the spirit and meaning behind your piece. If you don't have anything good to sculpt, don't sculpt it," Transfield says. "You need to have meaning behind it."

After his schooling in Hawaii, Transfield and his wife, Kelly, moved to New Zealand where he taught at a junior college and

became the head of the art department. After teaching there for 18 months, the Transfields decided to locate in Utah where his wife's family lives.

Transfield likes to have two or three pieces going at the same time. Currently he is working on several different series. One is a working woman series. He has one sculpture of a woman raking leaves, another hanging clothes on the line and still another woman washing her hair.

He also has a religious series of which "Christ Healing the Blind Man" is a part; another is Christ washing the feet of the apostles.

A piece he hopes to complete in time for the Olympics is

titled "Human Race;" he describes it as three muscular figures "exploding forward."

Another idea he has is sculpting the seven periods of the Creation.

How will he do them?

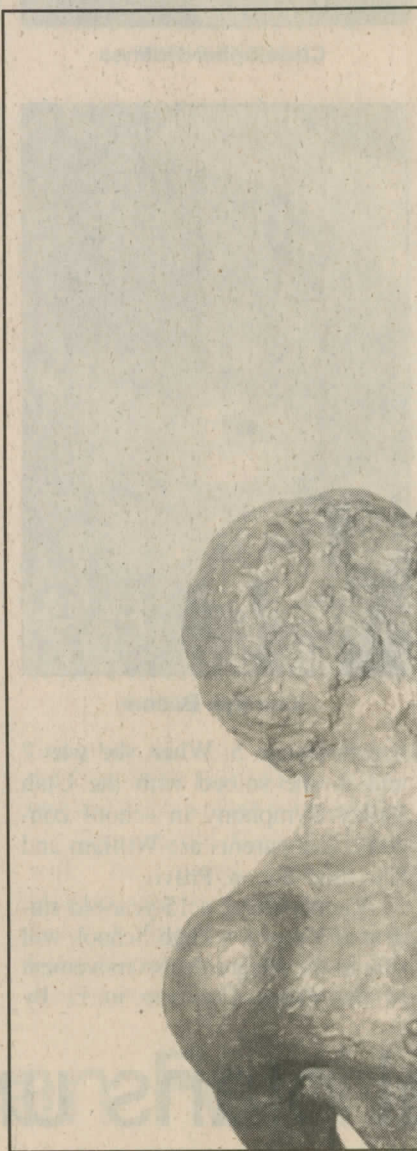
"With great difficulty!" he laughs, and adds "The worst thing about being a sculptor is that I want to hurry up to finish one because I have an idea for another."

What exactly is the process from beginning to end?

"The longest time and most important part in a sculpture should be planning, design and research," Transfield says. He compares it to a research paper: "You don't just write it first. It doesn't take long to write, but the research takes two years."

Transfield uses the lost wax process. His creative process starts with a thumbnail sketch in clay (3-4 inches). If he likes it, he enlarges it to 20 inches or more in clay.

Then he makes a rubber mold. From there he pours wax into the mold. Next he dips the wax in "slurry" nine times — dip and dry, dip and dry to build up a ceramic



LeRoy Transfield's sculpture "Christ Healing the Blind Man" (above) and "Madonna and Child" (below).

shell. The shell is then put in a kiln to melt the wax out and turn the ceramic into a bisque.

"Where the wax was, is now empty," explains Transfield. "That's where the bronze will go."

Next he melts down the bronze in the crucible at 2,000 degrees. He pours the bronze into the ceramic shell. When it's cool, he smashes the ceramic shell and the sculptor



# e Human Race



Daily Herald Photos/Jason Olson

ist Healing Child" (at left) won top honors in a "Works of Madonna and the Spirit" art contest in Pasadena, Calif. "Christ Healing" took Transfield a year to complete, "Madonna" took six months.

is left with a bronze piece.

Welding, grinding and sand-blasting takes the piece to where he wants it.

Finally, he uses chemicals to obtain the patina he wants: stone-looking, the natural bronze look of greenish brown or marble-looking are among the options.

How many copies does he pour?

"In the olden days 12 was the

magic number," Transfield says.

"The fewer made, the more exclusive each piece is."

The limited edition for the "Madonna" is 50; for "Christ Healing" it is 29. He pours two to three a month depending on demand and economics.

The "Madonna" piece took him six months to complete; "Christ Healing" took him a year from beginning to end.

Transfield did terra cotta sculptures instead of bronze when he was a "poor student."

"When you sculpt in terra cotta, it is a water-base clay. It dries, then you fire it and it's finished," the sculptor explains.

However, Transfield doesn't care for terra cotta as much as he does bronze. "Terra cotta is hard to maintain," he said. "Plus when you make a mold for bronze you can do many. Rather than do more terra cotta (of the same piece) I can be